

September 10, 2021

REMOTE PARTICIPATION POLICY

Town of Harpswell Planning Board

Pursuant to 1 M.R.S. § 403-B, and after public notice and hearing, the Harpswell Planning Board adopts the following policy to govern the participation, via remote methods, of members of the Planning Board and the public in the public proceedings or meetings of the Board.

Members of the Planning Board are expected to be physically present for meetings except when not practicable, such as in the case of an emergency or urgent issue that requires the Board to meet via remote methods, or an illness or temporary absence of a member that causes significant difficulty traveling to the meeting location. The chair or presiding officer of the Planning Board, in consultation with other members if appropriate and possible, will make a determination that remote methods of participation are necessary in as timely a manner as possible under the circumstances. A member who is unable to attend a meeting in person must notify the chair or presiding officer of the Planning Board as far in advance as possible.

Remote methods of participation may include telephonic or video technology allowing simultaneous reception of information and may include other means necessary to accommodate disabled persons. Remote participation will not be by text-only means such as e-mail, text messages, or chat functions.

The public will be provided a meaningful opportunity to attend via remote methods when any member of the Board participates via remote methods. If public input is allowed or required at the meeting, an effective means of communication between the Planning Board and the public will also be provided. The public will also be provided an opportunity to attend the meeting in person unless there is an emergency or urgent issue that requires the entire Planning Board to meet using remote methods.

Notice of all meetings will be provided in accordance with 1 M.R.S. § 406 and any applicable charter, ordinance, policy, or bylaw. When the public may attend via remote methods, notice of the meeting will include the means by which the public may access the meeting remotely and will provide a method for disabled persons to request necessary accommodation to access the meeting. Notice will also identify a location where the public may attend the meeting in person. The Planning Board will not restrict public attendance to remote methods except in the case of an emergency or urgent issue that requires the Board to meet using remote methods of attendance.

The Planning Board will make all documents and materials to be considered by the Board available, electronically or otherwise, to the public who attend remotely to the same extent customarily available to the public who attend in person, provided no additional costs are incurred by the Town.

All votes taken during a meeting using remote methods will be by roll call vote that can be seen and heard if using video technology, or heard if using audio technology only, by other members of the Planning Board and the public. A member of the Board who participates remotely will be considered present for purposes of a quorum and voting.

This policy will remain in force indefinitely unless amended or rescinded.